

ENGLISH NEWSLETTER FOR TEACHERS

The English Newsletter for Teachers is published by the Information Resource Center of the Public Affairs Office of the United States Embassy, Santiago, Chile. Our goal is to provide up-to-date resources and materials for English Language Teaching in Chile.

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Basic Academic Writing

By Maggie Guntren

Senior English Language Fellow

Using Little-Known Holidays in the ESL Classroom

By Jeffrey Gerber

"Writing saved me from the sin and inconvenience of violence."

Alice Walker, American Author

To some writing is as natural as breathing, while for others it is a painful journey from thought to pen to paper. Writing in one's first language is difficult enough, let alone trying to express ideas in a second or third.

The majority of English language learning programs at public schools and private English Institutes try to focus on all four language skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, writing is frequently left on the back burner to simmer, with the optimistic expectation that as students progress, this skill will be mastered with time.

As written English exams become more significant in Chile as a means to enter the university or to study abroad (the TOEFL, for example, has a writing component), the teaching of **basic academic writing** at all levels is becoming increasingly important.

This article intends to help readers discuss the different aspects of speaking and

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Back when I was learning Spanish in high school and at Ohio State University, I found that I enjoyed the classes where I was able to learn about Latin American culture and holidays the most. It was interesting to see how people in other countries celebrated Christmas, New Year's Day, and even Mother's Day.

The more I learned about these holidays or cultural events the more my classmates and I would participate. These topics were basically more fun and allowed my classmates and I the opportunity to express ourselves and ask questions. Normally, in a Spanish class you used to learn how to say "yo tengo un lapiz mi lapiz es amarillo". It's a great sentence but I have never used it in conversation.

When I started teaching English I remembered my experience learning Spanish and tried to incorporate the same positive experience in my classes. My students seemed to be interested in holidays that they had never heard of. This has been a great way for them to practice asking questions and it makes the class more entertaining.

Some of My Favorite Holidays:

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Sweetest Day is celebrated on the 3rd Saturday in October, primarily (but not exclusively) in the great lakes region. It's a day somewhat like Valentines Day where we give flowers, cards and candies not only to "sweethearts" but to anyone to whom we want to show appreciation or affection. Sweetest Day originated in Cleveland Ohio in the 1920's with Hurbert Kingston, who wanted to bring a little happiness to the lives of orphans, shut-ins and other people who were "forgotten". He began by simply distributing candy. Later, others participated and began to visit hospitals to cheer-up the sick, and to show kindness and appreciation to child laborers like newspaper and delivery boys for their work.

Susan B. Anthony Day is celebrated in Rochester New York on February 15th. Most of the festivities celebrating this day are held at the historical house where she lived and the University of Rochester. Festivities include parties, speeches, and the awarding of scholarships.

Susan B Anthony is remembered for her work for the women's rights movement. She was arrested in 1872 for registering and voting in the presidential election. Ms. Anthony was known for saying in her many speeches " the constitution says, we the people - not we the male citizens".

Fourteen years after her death in 1906, the nineteenth amendment to the constitution was passed. This amendment is sometimes referred to as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment.

Patriot's Day is celebrated on the third Monday in April in Massachusetts and Maine. This day commemorates the battles of Lexington and Concord and is marked with parades, speeches by politicians, the Boston marathon and even a major league baseball game. The most interesting act is a re-enactment of Paul Revere's famous ride to warn the minutemen. The re-enactment also includes the ride of William Dawes, who never received the fame that Revere did because of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem *Paul Revere's Ride*.

These are just some of the many holidays celebrated around the U.S. Most states have between one and six of these holidays, so there is plenty of material to use throughout the year.

Originally from Ohio, Jeff has taught at the Santiago BNC for seven years . He teaches international test preparation and conversation classes.

WHAT DO RABBITS AND EGGS HAVE TO DO WITH EASTER?

By Jay Blodgett



Easter is the most holy day in the Roman Catholic religion. Christians celebrate Easter to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some of the customs observed at Easter celebrations, however, pre-date Christianity and have their origins in ancient pagan rites.

Easter's ties to the ancient celebration of spring (during March and April in the Northern Hemisphere) has roots far deeper than any one belief or culture. Festivities marking the arrival of Spring help to remind us that there is always a chance to plant our dreams anew; that the cold of winter will pass; and, that in the course of humankind, you can always plant again.

Ms. Anthony was known for saying in her many speeches " The constitution says we the people - not we the male citizens!"

Long before Easter became the Catholic holiday it is today, people around the world celebrated spring with festivals that included many of the customs and traditions we associate with Easter today. In many ancient belief systems the period before an equinox or solstice (the Spring or Vernal Equinox occurs on or about March 21st) was a time of reflection on the past seasons. This period of silence would then be marked by a joyous celebration of light and sound that told all that the darkness had fled and that new life was coming back into the world. These ceremonies were an expression of hope and trust in the new lives that would blossom in the warmth of summer.

As Christianity grew and spread throughout the world, it was common practice to adopt or modify existing non-Christian festivals, sacred locations and even names, and assimilate them into the Christian theology. Christian missionaries seeking to convert the tribes of northern Europe realized that the time of the crucifixion of Jesus roughly coincided with these springtime celebrations, which emphasized the triumph of life over death.

Easter takes its name from Ishtar, the Babylonian and Assyrian goddess of love and fertility. Ishtar



evolved into Ostara, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, fertility, and the rising sun. According to Anglo-Saxon myth Ostara, wanting to delight some children one day, turned her pet bird into a rabbit. The rabbit

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English: A New Lingua Franca

By Luis Emilio Flores

Throughout history, mankind has eagerly looked for a common language that would enable communication with anybody in any part of the globe. Many languages at different points in our history have served this purpose: Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin, to name a few. They all were, at certain periods, languages used by a number of people with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds who were far from being similar, but they all had a field in common, say, science, literature, philosophy, etc. English has taken the place of these other languages, which is why when a student is assigned some reading he will experience the need to be able to read in English, since most technical books are originally written in English.

Esperanto was an effort to create an international language by taking elements from different languages and merging them into one. Unlike the languages mentioned above, it was artificial and bound to fail. English, on the contrary, is a language born from and spoken naturally by many people for hundreds of years. It has been incorporated into many people's culture for different historical reasons, but above all the need that continues to this day: to communicate with speakers of other languages.

In contrast with other languages, English is much easier to learn due to the lack of complexity of its grammar structures and the reduced number of verb tenses. For an Asian businessman it is much simpler to communicate in English with a businessman from, say, Latin America than to expect his counter-part to learn his complex Asian language, or vice versa. A language like English can be far more accurate and precise than some others, which makes the communication more fluent, and less ambiguous. What we tell our students is proven: in English" The shorter the better".

All of this has contributed to make English, out of 2,700 languages and dialects, the *Lingua Franca* of our era.

The Internet is the home of today's information land of English. Whenever you search for information on the net, you will see that out of ten web pages on a particular topic, eight are in English. Students who want to get higher-level education often travel abroad to obtain a Master's degree, or even a Ph.D. In all these stages knowing English as a second

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language represents the first step to even consider before applying to any university.

Language and Culture go hand in hand - one is the mirror of the other. In fact, one can only learn and understand a language well if one understands the culture behind it. How many times have we told our students to think in English? Well, that is nothing but to see the world through the eyes of the people who speak that language. That is the only way that our students will sound natural, fluent, and accurate when they use the language.

Like other countries before it, the USA has for many years received a flow of refugees from different countries, especially from Europe. In America, scientists and artists have found a safe harbor to develop their genius. From the moment they arrived, they left behind their native countries and their problems, and America instead gave them both a place to live in peace, and a new language to express their knowledge, English. Sitting

"Sitting at a table with a German, a Dutch, a Dane, a Norwegian, an Italian, and a Russian one realizes that only English can break the ice of being unable to meet the basic need of a human being - to communicate with his peers."

at a table with a German, a Dutch, a Dane, a Norwegian, an Italian, and a Russian one realizes that only English can break the ice of being unable to meet the basic need of a human being - to communicate with his peers. Everyone finds English as their common ground, though none of them is a native speaker.

Traveling to English speaking countries becomes a must for ESL teachers and instructors, as it's the only way to get the everyday culture essential to understanding a language and ultimately sharing it with our students. By teaching English we know we are giving our students the best tool to face today's challenges - they will be able to communicate with anybody regardless of their ethnic background.

Luis has been teaching ESL to children at the Santiago BNC for six years. Luis is originally from Punta Arenas.

All of this has contributed to make English, out of 2,700 languages and dialects, the Lingua Franca of our era.

(Continued from page 1)

writing, explain the basic writing process, and identify key “writing tools” that can assist students with writing processes. A chart has been added to the end of the article listing each writing step as well as a variety of ideas about how to accomplish that particular task.

The Basic Writing Process

The elements of the writing process include: prewriting, first draft, revisions, editing, final draft, and publishing.

Prewriting is the act of coming up with ideas. Sometimes students write to a prompt given by the teacher and other times ideas are freeform branching out from a creative writing task. Pre-writing is a step that needs to be included in the process and is something that needs to be taught and practiced. Researchers have found that good writers concentrate on ideas first, rather than the “correctness” of a piece. Using graphic organizers to help students sort out their thoughts is a great way to help them brainstorm.

Drafting is the first step of actually writing down ideas into a structured form. Graphic organizers from the pre-writing stage aid in organizing thoughts and actually putting them into sentences. The goal is for students to complete a first draft of their work.

Revision is not editing. Revision is looking at reorganizing information, combining a sentence or two or three, and selecting details to add flavor and life to the piece. Revising is the part of the writing process that looks at ideas and organization.

Editing is the step that most teachers love because it deals with the most obvious errors. Editing labors with the mechanics of writing, spelling, grammar, and other structural mistakes. Normally this is the time that the dreaded red pen appears; however, the experts say that giving too much feedback can hurt a learner’s attempt at continuing writing and not giving solid feedback leads students to believe that what they wrote isn’t worth reading. What do we do?

Research suggests that teachers decide on a specific skill that the class is working on and only correct for that one proficiency. For example, perhaps you are working on organizing an essay, therefore you only grade for how the students organized their paper, not the spelling, not the grammar, etc. This gives students the freedom to try out different styles and words and still be accountable to a specific skill.

This also provides teachers with the opportunity to conduct “mini-lessons” for their students. For one

week you may work on adding details to a paper, which would include adjectives, descriptions of setting, particulars about a character. Students’ work then would focus on that one skill. By the end of the term, students would be graded on all **taught** writing competencies.

For more information about this type of grading and teaching of writing, please see the 6 Traits of writing website that outlines specifics about this approach as well as provides rubrics to aid in scoring papers.

The final draft is created after students have revised and edited their work. This piece still may not be perfect, but students are not only gaining valuable English language instruction but also learning an important educational facility that is valued in every language and culture.

Publishing often is a step missed by teachers, but this is one of the keys to keeping our young writers writing. Publishing can be as simple as taping finished writing pieces to the wall of the classroom to creating a classroom blog or setting up a school-wide English language anthology.

**See Maggie’s
‘Ideas For Implementing Each Writing Step’
on page 5.**

Internet Resources

Graphic Organizers:

<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizers>

This website is a fabulous resource of downloadable organizers that range from problem-solution charts to basic cluster webs.

Six Trait Writing:

<http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/>

Describes the six traits of writing and includes assessment rubrics for each trait.

References

Kroesch, Gary and Mary Catherine Swanson. [The Write Path: An Interdisciplinary Writing and Reading Curriculum. History-Social Science Teacher Guide.](#) San Diego: AVID PRESS, 2002.

Peregoy, Suzanne F. and Owen F. Boyle. [Reading, Writing, and Learning in ESL: A Resource Book for K-12 Teachers.](#) Longman, 2001.

O'Malley, Michael and Lorraine Valdez Pierce. [Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners: Practical Approaches for Teachers.](#) USA: Longman, 1996.

Ur, Penny. [A Course in Language Teaching.](#) Cambridge, Cambridge Press, 1991.

Ideas for Implementing Each Writing Step

Pre-Writing

- ◇ Writing prompts from the textbook
- ◇ Responding to headlines in a newspaper
- ◇ Pictures
- ◇ Writing interesting questions and answering them
- ◇ Creating brainstorming webs
- ◇ Using graphic organizers to help structure ideas into a working draft.
- ◇ Drafting
- ◇ Graphic organizers
- ◇ Word processors

Revision

- ◇ Show not tell
- ◇ Shorten sentences
- ◇ Ask students to read their work aloud and decide what doesn't make sense or sounds correct
- ◇ Peer conferences
- ◇ Individual teacher conferences

Editing

- ◇ Peer editing groups
- ◇ Practice proof-reading as a whole group on the overhead projector
- ◇ Computer software programs such as Microsoft Word
- ◇ Mini-lessons
- ◇ 6 Traits of Writing

Final Draft

- ◇ Pencil and paper versions
- ◇ Word processed versions
- ◇ Other templates, such as a newspaper model
- ◇ Final Draft
- ◇ Pencil and paper versions
- ◇ Word processed versions
- ◇ Other templates, such as a newspaper model

Publishing

- ◇ Website
- ◇ Posters
- ◇ Taping finished work to the wall of your classroom
- ◇ A classroom newspaper
- ◇ A showcase in the school lobby
- ◇ At parent meetings
- ◇ A school-wide anthology of English writing
- ◇ Spoken word presentations
- ◇ Ask the local newspaper to print some of the students work
- ◇ Submissions to Mineduc contests

Selected Online Resources for Writing

A-Z Writing

<http://www.atozwriting.com/>

Dave's ESL Café: Writing

<http://www.eslcafe.com/idea/index.cgi?Writing>

Purdue's Online Writing Lab

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/internet/resources/index.html>

Ohio ESL Writing Resources for Teachers

<http://www.ohiou.edu/esl/teacher/writing.html>



Courtesy of MAGNUM Photos

*Marilyn Monroe, 1955
Elliot Erwitt*

Have you seen this photograph before?

Did you know that the photographer, Elliot Erwitt, was born in Russia, but became an American citizen? For over 50 years, Elliot Erwitt's keen eye for the poignant moment has abled him to capture unforgettable images like the one above, as well as memorable photos of historic figures and events, such as Kruschev arguing with Nixon in the 'kitchen cabinet debate'.

PartnerSA, in collaboration with several corporate sponsors, is hosting a collection of over 100 of Erwitt's photos, which will be on exhibit at the Museo Bellas Artes June 15 through July 30. Elliot Erwitt will be in Santiago for several speaking engagements in conjunction with the exhibit, courtesy of the Public Affairs Office of the U. S. Embassy.

To view or purchase prints of Elliot Erwitt's photos, visit these sites:

<http://www.ellioterwitt.com/entry.html>

[http://www.magnumarchive.com/c/htm/TreePf_MAG.aspx?](http://www.magnumarchive.com/c/htm/TreePf_MAG.aspx?Stat=Photographers_Portfolio&E=29YL53IRYAK)

[TreePf_MAG.aspx?](http://www.magnumarchive.com/c/htm/TreePf_MAG.aspx?Stat=Photographers_Portfolio&E=29YL53IRYAK)

[Stat=Photographers_Portfolio&E=29YL53IRYAK](http://www.magnumarchive.com/c/htm/TreePf_MAG.aspx?Stat=Photographers_Portfolio&E=29YL53IRYAK)

What Do Rabbits(Continued from page 2)

proceeded to lay brightly colored eggs, which Ostara gave to the children. In Celtic tradition, the rabbit was a symbol of fertility and new life, and Germanic tradition held that the rabbit brought new life each spring.

Eggs symbolize birth and fertility in many cultures. The custom of giving eggs at Easter time has been traced back to Egyptians, Persians, Gauls, Greeks and Romans, to whom the egg was a symbol of life. Ancient Egyptians and Persians colored eggs to give as gifts during their spring festival, which took place in April. The eggs were painted with bright colors to celebrate spring and were used in Easter egg-rolling contests and given as gifts, a practice that predated the advent of Christianity.

Christian Easter gradually absorbed these traditional symbols, and in 325 AD, the council of Nice issued an edict that read, "Easter was to fall upon the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the Vernal Equinox; and if said full moon fell on a Sunday, the Easter should be the Sunday after." The date of Passover is variable as it is dependent on the phases of the moon, and thus Easter is also a movable feast.



In ancient Europe, eggs were forbidden during Lent, therefore they were a prized Easter gift for children and servants. Eggs of different colors were taken from the nests of various birds and used to make talismans. The search through the woods for eggs gradually evolved into the Easter egg hunt, and eggs painted bright colors to celebrate the sun and springtime eventually replaced wild birds' eggs. The colors and patterns sometimes had romantic symbolism, and lovers exchanged eggs as they send Valentine's Day cards today.

In the same way that the ancient traditions were incorporated into the Christian holiday, the rabbit evolved to become a symbol of a holiday celebrating a resurrection. The first documented use of the bunny as a symbol of Easter appears in Germany in the 1500s, and it was the Pennsylvania Dutch who brought the beneficent Easter Bunny to the United States in the 1700s. Children eagerly awaited the arrival of Oschter Haws and his gifts of candy and chocolate just like they did for Kris Kringle.

As Easter celebrations became more common after the Civil War, the custom of chocolate eggs took hold. The Easter basket originates from the ancient Catholic custom of taking the food for Easter dinner to mass to be blessed. This, too, mirrored the even more ancient ritual of offering the first crops and seedlings to the god (or gods) to insure a good growing season.

Jay Blodgett is the editor of the English Newsletter for Teachers. Jay has taught ESL in Panama, Croatia, and the Dominican Republic, and he works in the Information Resource Center of the Public Affairs Office at the U.S. Embassy Santiago.

'What Do Rabbits And Eggs Have To Do With Easter' was compiled from these excellent online resources, which I highly recommend.

<http://catholicism.about.com/cs/easter/a/symbols.htm>

<http://www.easter-traditions.com/>

<http://www.factmonster.com/spot/easterintro1.html>

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/easterintro1.html>

<http://www.web-holidays.com/easter/>

http://www.equinox-and-solstice.com/html/vernal_equinox.html

<http://www.kidzworld.com/site/p1921.htm>

http://www.religioustolerance.org/spring_equinox.htm

For additional information and links to excellent resources for English Language Learning, visit the

English Teaching Site

<http://www.englishteaching.cl/>

U.S. Embassy Santiago

<http://www.usembassy.cl/>

And Chile TESOL

<http://www.tesolchile.net/>

We would like to invite everyone to contribute articles, suggestions, recommendations, advice, links, or even poetry. Our goal is to establish a network where English language teachers and students help each other. Please direct all contributions or questions to

ircchile@state.gov

with "English Newsletter" as the subject of your email.

Online Resources for Teachers: Holidays

US Government Resources

Celebrate Holidays in the US

<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/symbols/celebrat.pdf>

USINFO Holidays in the US

<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/factover/holidays.htm>

US State Holidays

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0002069.html>

Non-Governmental Resources

Bizarre American Holidays

<http://library.thinkquest.org/2886/>

Holidays on the Net

<http://www.holidays.net/dailys.htm>

Check out their list of “fun and wacky” holidays

Public Holidays by Country

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Public_holidays_by_country

US Holidays for ESL students

<http://www.eskimo.com/~cjh/esl/book1/chap2.html>

US and Canadian Holidays

http://www.vpcalendar.net/Holiday_Dates/2000_2005.html

Unusual Holiday Traditions

http://www.lhj.com/lhj/printableStory.jhtml;jsessionid=GVMGCKFWJF3RBQFIBQSB5VQ?storyid=/templatedata/lhj/story/data/UnusualHolidayTraditions_10112004.xml&catref=lcatt70

YAHOO/United States/Society and Culture/Holidays and Observances

http://dir.yahoo.com/Regional/Countries/United_States/Society_and_Culture/Holidays_and_Observances/

Lesson Plans and Other Resources for Teachers: Holidays, Culture, and Traditions

US Government Resources

Kennedy Center/Arts Edge/Lesson Plan/ Tolerance: Comparing Cultural Holidays

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2354/>

In this lesson, students compare the holiday of Halloween, as celebrated in the United States, to the Mexican holiday of El Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead, November 1-2). Students compare both holidays by looking at traditions, music, and visual art.

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Kennedy Center/Arts Edge/Lesson Plan/ America, A Home for Every Culture

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2316/>

Through teacher-guided discussion and hands-on activities using words that became part of the English language as a result of immigrant groups settling in America, students will explore how various cultures have contributed to making the United States the unique and diverse country that it is today.

Library of Congress/The Learning Page/Lesson Plan/Exploring Cultural Rituals

<http://rs6.loc.gov/learn/lessons/99/ritual/intro.html>

Another excellent resource for teaching about cultural traditions using photos from the American Memory Archives in the Library of Congress.

National Endowment for the Humanities/EDSITEment/ What They Left Behind: Early Multi-National Influences in the United States

http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=336

The lessons in this unit are designed to help students make connections between European voyages of discovery, colonial spheres of influence, and various aspects of American culture. Vestiges of that history are part of the American cultural landscape.

Non-Governmental Resources

DiscoverySchool.com

<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/travelers-southamerica/>

Great lesson plan for teaching about similarities and differences between cultures by comparing holiday celebrations.

Heritage and Citizenship – Traditions and Celebrations

http://www.gecdsb.on.ca/d&g/ss1/ss/social_s/hc2.htm

This site has lots of lessons designed for young learners that would work well in ESL classes.

Out of Season Lesson Plans

<http://www.everythingsl.net/lessons/offseason.php>

This site features a variety of lesson plans using holiday customs and traditions to celebrate cultural diversity.

ReadingA-Z.com

http://www.readinga-z.com/newfiles/levels/lesson_plans/l/worldholidays/worldholidays_print.html

An excellent lesson plan using World Holidays to practice all the students' reading skills. The plan is designed for use with a specific text, but can easily be adapted to other materials. (Be sure to look at the wide selection of lesson plans available on this site.)

Scholastic.com/Lesson Plans/Holidays: A Sampler From Around the World

http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonrepro/k_2theme/holidays.htm

Around the globe, people mark holidays with special traditions, festivities, and services. A quick tour of some holiday traditions (this is just one of 166 returns on a search for holiday traditions on this site).